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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 25 February 2016, at 10 a.m.

Temporary Chair: Mr. Zerihoun ..... (Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs)
Chair: Mr. Ramírez Carreño..... (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Opening of the session by the Assistant Secretary-General

1. **The Temporary Chair**, reading out a message from the Secretary-General, said that prompt action must be taken to end colonialism, which was a long-standing ambition of the United Nations that was reflected in successive General Assembly resolutions. To that end, he urged the Committee, administering Powers, Non-Self-Governing Territories and other stakeholders to intensify efforts to realize the goals of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and called for a shift towards implementation. Particular attention should be paid to carrying out the actions approved by the General Assembly, including the commitment by the Special Committee to dispatch one visiting mission per year to a Non-Self-Governing Territory in support of its mandate.

2. The Committee had a central role to play in ensuring that concrete results were accomplished in the area of decolonization, which was a key aim underscored in the 2015 report of the Secretary-General on the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (A/70/73). In addition, the Committee must seize all available opportunities to strengthen action-oriented dialogue to generate further momentum for the implementation of the decolonization mandate. In that regard, the Secretariat would continue to assist the Committee in undertaking its work with renewed vigour and creativity, in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Election of the Chair

3. *Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) was elected Chair by acclamation.*

4. *Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) took the Chair.*

5. **The Chair** said that the delegations of Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Costa Rica, Ghana, Morocco, Palau, Panama, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka and the Holy See had indicated their wish to participate in the work of the Committee as observers.

6. The instrumental role of Simón Bolívar in bringing independence to his country, following a brutal war that had killed nearly half of its population, as well as to countries throughout Latin America, attested to the commitment of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to promote the inalienable right of all peoples to freedom and sovereignty. Colonialism was a historical abomination that should be confined to the past.

7. Along with peace and security, development and human rights, decolonization was a defining priority of the United Nations, as evidenced by the increase in its membership as a consequence of the national independence processes following the Second World War. The Organization had played a key role in supporting the liberation of many of the 80 former colonies that had achieved independence following the series of wars and grass-roots movements that had gained momentum in Asia, Africa and Latin America during the 1950s and 1960s.

8. Colonialism was a blatant violation of human rights that stood in opposition to the Charter of the United Nations. Notwithstanding the noteworthy results achieved by the Committee, the 17 unresolved cases of colonialism demonstrated that the decolonization process had not yet concluded. To avoid a repetition of the wars of previous decades, immediate measures must be taken to realize the right to self-determination of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, in accordance with the call in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) for a speedy and unconditional end to colonialism, a shameful anachronism that hindered the promotion of world peace and cooperation.

9. Ongoing dialogue between the administering Powers, the Committee and the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories would be critical to develop a negotiated solution to the question of decolonization. In line with Chapter XI of the Charter of the United Nations, the administering Powers must intensify their efforts to apply the principle of self-determination to the Territories on a case-by-case basis, in the light of the special and particular situation of each case and in accordance with all the relevant United Nations resolutions and decisions. The cooperation of administering Powers, including with regard to providing information on the Territories under their administration in accordance with Article 73 *e* of the Charter, was also required.

10. The persistence of colonialism under various guises had contributed to an ongoing imbalance of power between subjugated peoples and colonial Powers in the twenty-first century. As a country that continued to suffer the consequences of the unpunished plunder of its territory by colonial Powers during the nineteenth century, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela stood in solidarity with the struggle of peoples under colonial occupation. In that context, he would work with the Committee to ensure the full implementation of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and the measures adopted by the General Assembly in connection with the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism as a matter of urgent priority, with a view to paving the way for the full independence of the world's remaining colonies. In addition, he would continue to organize informal meetings between the Bureau of the Committee, the administering Powers and other stakeholders to determine how the Committee could contribute to discussions on the situation of particular Territories. Lastly, the Committee would continue to hold regional seminars and conduct annual visiting missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/231.

11. The international community must resist the manipulative pressures exerted by administering Powers and should work with the Non-Self-Governing Territories, particularly islands, which were more vulnerable to natural disasters and environmental degradation, including the risk of disappearance. Member States must hasten the process of decolonization in order to promote peace, human rights and social and economic development.

Adoption of the agenda

12. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of other officers of the Committee

13. *Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba), Mr. Minah (Sierra Leone) and Mr. Djani (Indonesia) were elected Vice-Chairs, and Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) was elected Rapporteur, by acclamation.*

Organization of work (A/AC.109/2016/L.1 and A/AC.109/2016/L.2)

14. **The Chair** drew attention to a note by the Secretary-General (A/AC.109/2016/L.1) indicating the resolutions and decisions relevant to the work of the Committee for the current year. The Committee also had before it a note by the Chair (A/AC.109/2016/L.2) containing suggestions concerning the Committee's organization of work, programme of work and timetable. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the tentative programme of work and timetable for the current year, with the understanding that they might be subsequently revised if required.

15. *It was so decided.*

16. **The Chair** suggested that, in accordance with the practice of the General Assembly, the Committee should agree to continue the practice whereby its meetings could be declared open without the presence of the quorum required under rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. That would enable the Committee to avoid late starts and proceed expeditiously with its work, thereby making optimal use of available resources. However, in accordance with rule 108, the presence of a majority of the members would be required for any decision to be taken.

17. *It was so decided.*

Organization of the 2016 Pacific regional seminar

18. **The Chair** said that a host for the 2016 Pacific regional seminar must be found as a matter of urgency to ensure its timely organization. The processing of information concerning participants in the 2016 seminar would require additional time compared with previous seminars owing to the need to transfer data from the former Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) to the new centralized administrative system, Umoja, for seminar participants currently in the system, and to establish a database in Umoja for first-time participants. He therefore suggested that Committee members from the Asia-Pacific region that were interested in hosting the seminar should notify him by 14 March 2016;if no offers were received from Asia-Pacific members by that date, other Committee members could volunteer to host the seminar. Once a host had been determined, a meeting on the planning and organization of the seminar would be held on 31 March 2016.

19. *It was so decided.*

20. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his Government was currently considering whether it

could host the 2016 Pacific regional seminar without that event being overshadowed by another international conference scheduled to be held in Tehran in June 2016. The Committee would be notified of the Government's decision in the coming days.

Other matters

21. **Mr. Morejón Pazmiño** (Ecuador) said that his delegation remained deeply concerned at the persistence of colonialism for the third consecutive decade and at the inability of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories to attain statehood owing to a lack of political will on the part of the administering Powers. However, the Committee had increasingly engaged with actors directly involved in the decolonization process, including the administering Powers. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the participation of France in a meeting of the Committee and its authorization of a visiting mission to New Caledonia as crucial steps towards advancing dialogue that should be emulated. In addition, the reinscription of French Polynesia on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories with the support of the Committee represented a significant achievement. That list should be strictly descriptive, transparent and based on definitive criteria.

22. Going forward, the Secretary-General should participate in the work of the Committee on a regular basis and visiting missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories should be dispatched on an annual basis in order to reduce the gaps between policy and practice. Moreover, a one-size-fits-all approach should be avoided in applying the two principles of decolonization, namely self-determination and territorial integrity, to the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. In that connection, the Chair had an important mission to establish a road map for concluding the decolonization process before 2020.

23. **Mr. Coloma Grimberg** (Chile) said that his delegation wished to know how many Committee members were required to be present for a decision to be taken. On other matters, Committee members should be informed regularly of the progress made in the search for a host for the 2016 Pacific regional seminar to ensure that, should no offers be received from Asia-Pacific members of the Committee, other interested members of the Committee could volunteer to host.

24. **Ms. Ukabiala** (Secretary of the Committee) said that, in accordance with rule 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the presence of 29 Committee members would be required for any decision to be taken.

25. **Ms. Savitri** (Indonesia) said that Non-Self-Governing Territories should be delisted on a case-by-case basis after balanced and thorough consideration of the particular circumstances in each of those Territories. Her delegation would support the Committee in that endeavour and in organizing the upcoming Pacific regional seminar.

26. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that steps must be taken to address the situation of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, in particular the situation of Puerto Rico. The eradication of colonialism was a long-standing priority for Latin America and the Caribbean. At its Second Summit, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States had declared the region a Zone of Peace, for which decolonization was a crucial requirement.

27. **Ms. Rodríguez Abascal** (Cuba) said that her delegation was confident that efforts to fulfil the Committee's mandate would be intensified under the leadership of the incoming Chair. It called on Committee members to work assiduously to carry out the Committee's decisions with a view to liberating the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories from the yoke of colonialism.

28. **Mr. Fawundu** (Sierra Leone) expressed the support of Sierra Leone for the work of the Chair during 2016.

29. **Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the enduring contribution of Simon Bolívar's legacy to the history of decolonization lent particular importance to the election of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela as Chair of the Committee.

30. **Ms. Benhabouche** (Observer for Algeria) said that her delegation would fully support and participate in the work of the Committee during 2016.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.